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ABSTRACT

Information about the functions and achievements of the Des Moines Independent Community School District's Department of Information Management is provided in this evaluation report. The department provides leadership and management services for the district in the areas of strategic planning, program evaluation, testing/assessment, and student information operations. Following an outline of the district mission and departmental responsibility statements, the first section describes the department's role in strategic planning, program evaluation, assessment, and student information in terms of history, policies and regulations, and improvements. The second section examines the department's role in input evaluation, particularly in budget analysis. Process and product evaluations are described in the third and fourth sections, with particular attention to outcomes of the strategic planning process, program evaluation, student assessment, and student records. Future plans are summarized in the final section. Two figures are included. (LMI)

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92-098

PLANNING/EVALUATION REPORT

ED349627

PROGRAM EVALUATION ASSESSMENT

STRATEGIC PLANNING RESEARCH

STUDENT INFORMATION

Department of Information Management
Des Moines Independent Community School District
1800 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-3399

May 19, 1992

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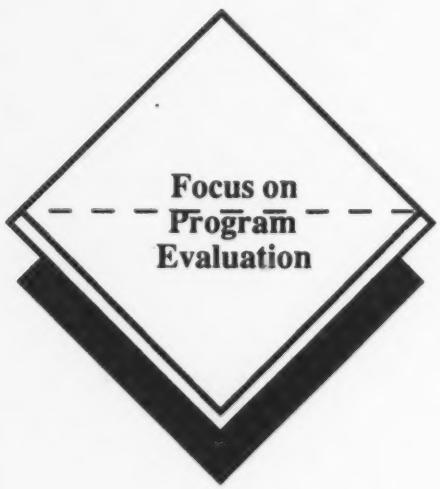

EA 024 110

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Department of Information Management
EVALUATION ABSTRACT

CONTEXT EVALUATION

The Department of Information Management provides leadership and management services for the district in the areas of strategic planning for district improvement, technology, telecommunications, accountability, program evaluation, research, testing/assessment, and student information operations. Technology, including telecommunications will be evaluated in a separate report.

The department, formerly known as the Department of Evaluation, Research, and Testing, received its present title in July 1990. With the change in title came a corresponding change in function and a movement away from a concentration on evaluation, research, and testing to a more integrated role that stressed strategic planning as the centerpiece for all other departmental functions. Since the department plays a pivotal role in strategic planning and school-based management, it is necessary to acquire an understanding of these concepts in order to fully understand the role of the department.

INPUT EVALUATION

The operational budget for the department is approximately 0.4 percent of the district's operating budget. Excluding personnel costs, the Fiscal Year 1992 budget for the department was $142,565.00. This does not include the areas of technology and telecommunications which are included in a separate report. There are nine full-time equivalent (FTE) staff who perform administrative, technical, or clerical duties in the areas of program evaluation, strategic planning, testing and research, and student information. The budget for staff in FY 1992 was $239,651.00.

PROCESS EVALUATION

The department is heavily involved in the evaluation component of the strategic planning process. This includes collecting and compiling outcome information from the evaluation of goals and objectives contained within school and district improvement plans and from the central staff's responsibility statements. The current program evaluation system centers around the district's needs for evaluation information in all programs and service areas. Administration of academic tests and other student assessments responds to the district's needs for student outcome information. The student information section fills all requests for records requested by schools, businesses, and former students, and also generates numerous state and district reports annually. Three of the goals in the 1991-92 District Improvement Plan relate to the functions of the Department of Information Management, exclusive of technology and telecommunications.

PRODUCT EVALUATION

Specific outcomes of the strategic planning process, for which the Department of Information Management had major responsibilities, included improvement of school objectives, preparation of the annual *Strategic Planning Report*, coordination of preparation of the *State of the Schools Report,* and preparation and distribution of school information bases. In the area of program evaluation, the expansion of the system using the new model has meant the amount of useful information regarding curricular areas, programs, and departments has reached a level never before achieved. Since the current cycle began in April 1990, the department has monitored the preparation and presentation of 29 program evaluation reports. In the area of assessment, the last two years have seen the development or redevelopment of 16 new objectives-based tests. The testing program has the support of building staff persons, as indicated by the high percentage of

testing specialists that volunteer to continue in their position after one year. Student information personnel have worked closely with building staffs to assist them in their use of the student accounting database. They also managed the widely used Macintosh network and have worked on the longitudinal database that will be activated in the fall of 1992.

FUTURE PLANS SUMMARY

Future plans and needs to be addressed by the Department of Information Management include the following:

- improving timing, content, and format of the school and district improvement plans
- improving the calendar for strategic planning activities
- continuing development of an annual State of the Schools Report to provide stakeholders with information on district operations
- developing materials to assist program evaluation authors in writing better abstracts
- developing a more logical ordering of evaluation presentations
- establishing a system whereby schools could further disaggregate data in school information bases to answer questions of interest to local stakeholders
- enhancing the process of continuously monitoring student progress
- exploring the expansion of student performance-based assessments and portfolios
- establishing levels of expectation for students in terms of mastering subject matter objectives
- developing a process to store and transfer student records electronically.

A copy of the complete evaluation report is available upon request from the Department of Information Management, Des Moines Public Schools, 1800 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50309-3399, telephone: (515) 242-7839.

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Des Moines Independent Community School District
Des Moines, Iowa

May 19, 1992

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DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

The Des Moines Independent Community School District will provide a quality educational program to a diverse community of students where all are expected to learn.

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

The Department of Information Management provides leadership and direction for the district's planning, technology, accountability, program evaluation, research, testing/assessment and student information operations.

CONTEXT EVALUATION

Departmental Functions

The Department of Information Management provides leadership and management services for the district in the areas of strategic planning for district improvement, technology, telecommunications, accountability, program evaluation, research, testing/assessment, and student information operations. Technology, including telecommunications, will be evaluated in a separate report.

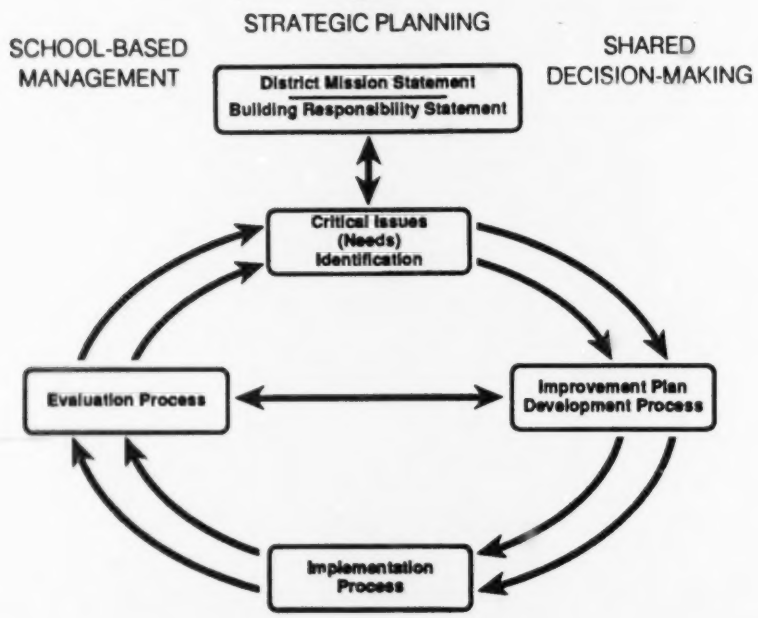
Technology and telecommunications are not included in this report.

The department received its present title in July 1990. With the change in title came a corresponding change in function and a movement away from a concentration on evaluation, research and testing (plus technology and telecommunications) to a more integrated role that stressed strategic planning as the centerpiece for all the other departmental functions. To understand fully the role of the department requires an understanding of the overall strategic planning and school-based management operations of the district, since the department plays a pivotal role in facilitating these initiatives.

Figure 1 portrays the major functions in the district's method of strategic planning for school-based management through shared decision-making. The Department of Information Management establishes an annual calendar for strategic planning activities. The district and the buildings begin their planning year with a review of the district mission statement and the individual building responsibility (mission) statements. These statements of purpose are constant referents throughout the strategic planning process. In the figure the outside circle represents district activities while the inside circle portrays building activities.

How do things get done in a top-down/ bottom-up environment?

Figure 1



Assessing needs involves internal and external scanning.

Following a re-examination of the district mission statement and their building responsibility statements, school-based councils begin to identify critical issues (needs). This includes looking at external opportunities and threats as well as internal strengths and weaknesses. To assist in the process, the Department of Information Management provides each building a school information base. Included is such information as enrollments, enrollment trends, types of enrollments, trends in the composition of enrollments, mobility of students, enrollment and staffing for special programs, all types of student achievement trends disaggregated by race, gender, and socio-economic status, attendance trends, suspensions (also disaggregated), student aspirations, success of graduates as college freshmen, staff information, facility information, and a computer inventory for the building. Each year the department refines and expands the school information base in an effort to ensure that each building is provided the most useful data to assist its planning.

Also available for planning is information on fall enrollments, enrollment projections, minority enrollments, and school withdrawals, which emanate from the Department of Information Management at specified times during each school year.

improvement plans

After examining their school's information base, school-based councils agree on the targets for the coming year, then begin to prepare their building improvement plans by writing objectives of one to three years in duration to address their identified needs. The department gives direction and assistance in this process by providing a standard format for writing objectives, training building staff in how to write objectives, and assisting in the actual writing on request. Departmental staff critique all building objectives.

Another part of the improvement plan development process is the writing of action plans by building staff. Professional staff in each building prepare the action plan for each objective. This is a list of strategies and tactics to accomplish the objective, who will be responsible for each task, when it will be completed, and the costs required, if any. The action plans provide a major basis for principal evaluations in the spring of each year.

Concurrent with the building improvement plans, a district improvement plan is drafted by Information Management staff members. This plan is based in part upon a consideration of the needs identified at the building level; however, much of its content results from district-wide efforts for improvement. The draft proceeds through several meetings of the district's Strategic Planning Committee, the School Board Advisory Committee, and the Administrative Council before reaching the board for consideration. Prior to considering the draft of the proposed district improvement plan each year, the board examines the building objectives for the forthcoming year and a progress report on the goals contained within the current year's building improvement plan.

When the building and district improvement plans are complete, central staff members prepare responsibility statements for the forthcoming year. These reflect not only responsibilities for ongoing departmental activities, but those for the goals contained in the building and district improvement plans. The Department of Information Management monitors the preparation and critiques the responsibility statements from central staff administrators.

responsibility statements

Following the circular model, the department is heavily involved in the evaluation process. The basis for evaluation is the generation of quantitative and qualitative information upon which to make judgments. The entire purpose of testing/assessment and program evaluation is devoted to this task, as is much of the work of the student information section. Separate sections of this report are devoted to strategic planning, assessment, program evaluation, and student information. Additionally, the department is responsible for collecting and compiling outcome information from the evaluation of objectives and goals contained within the building and district improvement plans. These are printed annually in the district's *Strategic Planning Report*, and also generate information for evaluation. The department is devoted to the management of information to identify areas in need of improvement.

The department is devoted to the management of information to identify areas in need of improvement.

History

Beginning around 1965, there was an increasing number of federal programs, funding for which was contingent upon some provision for an annual evaluation of each program. A few of the programs required the evaluation to be done by a group "outside" the organization operating the program. Some required an "outside" audit of the evaluation, but allowed the actual evaluation to be completed by an evaluator "inside" the operating organization. Others allowed an "inside" evaluation but the evaluation had to be reviewed at the state level. In a district the size of the Des Moines Public Schools, the number of programs requiring evaluations was considerable and the time and expertise of the program coordinators regarding evaluation was very limited.

The district decided to establish its own evaluation department to effect cost savings in hiring outside evaluators.

Before the establishment of the department, some Title I evaluations were contracted to EPIC Diversified Systems Corporation of Tucson. The savings realized from EPIC costs covered well over half the department budget in its first few years and EPIC was evaluating only Title I Reading and Mathematics (two programs).

The present Department of Information Management began in July 1972 as the Department of Evaluation. The position of Director of Evaluation had been funded in the budget for two years before being filled in 1972. The department was placed within the Administrative Services Division to keep the evaluation function separate from the division responsible for operating the programs that would be evaluated. It was thought that in this way the evaluators employed by the department would be somewhat similar to "outside" evaluators and not be biased about programs they were to evaluate. Three full time positions were authorized when the department was initiated: Director, Title I Program Evaluator, and Secretary. There was

such a proliferation of programs in operation within the district that it took the two professional staff about four months to locate where they were taking place.

Criterion-referenced testing began in 1974.

Data regarding the programs with the highest priority for evaluation were gathered during the 1972-73 school year; during the summer and fall of 1973, a total of 20 program evaluations were written by the director and the Title I Program Evaluator. There were 10 separate Title I programs that were evaluated, plus the Douglass Learning Center, Career Placement Center, East Area Guidance project, Follow Through, Head Start, New Horizons, Reading Resource Teacher project, Right-to-Read, Soul Street, and Instructional Management-Reading Skills. The following year (1973-74) the number of evaluations went up to 25, with the addition of Secondary Learning Disabilities (a teacher training program), Marine Corps Junior ROTC, Individually Guided Education (IGE), Equal Educational Opportunities, and the Des Moines Desegregation program. Two evaluation assistants were hired and the Title I Program Evaluator was replaced after he received a promotion to another administrative position in the district. The 1973-74 year is also important in the history of the department because it saw the first developmental efforts toward criterion-referenced testing--beginning with a group of four elementary schools conducting a pilot program in social studies testing (grades 4-6). The social studies testing was expanded to all elementary schools the following year. Criterion-referenced testing was originally introduced in the district as a method of providing curriculum evaluation. The initial efforts were brought together with all other sources of achievement information, and a report was prepared for each subject area that was tested.

The 1974-75 school year saw a major expansion of the Des Moines Desegregation evaluation and the first "research" the department had conducted: "A Study of Achievement Variables of Sixth Grade Students." This was the period when school effects were being studied nationally and the Des Moines board and staff had a high interest in this effort. The year also saw the first *Science: A Process Approach* (SAPA) test developed and piloted. A report entitled "Teachers Evaluate the SCORE Process," submitted by Dr. Joseph Millard of AEA 11 in July 1975, indicated that the SCORE testing system was generally accepted by the teachers, and there was support for continuing the project. It was also desired that the objectives and test items be further refined. SCORE was further used to evaluate the junior high (grades seven, eight, and nine) language arts and reading curriculum in 1976.

Following the early positive evaluations of the district's involvement in objectives-based testing, the Department of Evaluation began developing objectives-based tests for other curriculum areas. Meanwhile, the program evaluations being written by the department were continuing to include all the Title I programs and new initiatives like Opportunities Unlimited, Executive Internships, Des Moines Traditional School, and the Early Childhood Language Program.

By 1976-77 the district criterion-referenced testing program included elementary math, science, language arts, social studies, and some subject areas of junior high school. The department had begun to track achievement results by school on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Iowa Tests

of Educational Development (ITED) in all subtests. The year also saw the passing of the original Code 280.12 by the Iowa legislature and the first mandated "needs assessments" across the state. The department conducted a needs assessment for the district with the assistance of Heartland AEA.

Staff were added; responsibilities became more specialized.

The workload for departmental staff was growing each year, and in 1977-78 the workload problem was recognized by the superintendent and board. In February 1978 the board determined that the department should be expanded "by spending an additional approximately $50,000!" The department added three new staff members on July 1 and, for the first time, began to separate its areas of responsibility among the various staff members. Until this time, all staff might work in some fashion on all departmental tasks. While this continued for a few responsibilities, a much higher degree of specialization was used from 1978 until the present. The 1978-79 year saw the conduct of a Transportation Management audit, a research project on Staff Absences (with a corollary research study on Substitute Teachers), an examination of the Alternatives to Suspension, and a look at the Dual Principalship. The study "Staff Absences--Where Do We Stand?" received the national award for best report of findings of a management-related issue from Division H (Evaluation) of the American Educational Research Association in April, 1980. The department also became the Department of Evaluation, Research and Testing.

The District Research Committee developed from the desire by building staff to prevent schools from being inundated with requests for participation in research projects. Before 1978, the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction formed a committee before which individuals requesting permission to do research within the district appeared to present their research proposals. If accepted, each researcher was allowed to proceed with the study. When the research committee approved a study, buildings were confident that a project would enhance the educational process in the district in some way, and would therefore generally be willing to participate.

The various responsibilities are reported separately.

Beginning with the 1979-80 school year this section of the report is divided into functions (strategic planning, program evaluation, assessment and student information).

Strategic Planning

History

Although district goals had been prepared earlier, 1980-81 marked an important step in the history of planning efforts in the Des Moines Public Schools. In February of 1980, the board established eight goals as having the highest priority in 1980-81. These goals (among them "providing special assistance to students not making satisfactory progress in basic skill areas" and "establishing a public information program to keep citizens informed") were presented to each building and central office department. Each building was asked to prepare specific objectives to direct its work toward achievement of the district goals. Dr. William Anderson, Superintendent of Schools, stated, "it is hoped this process will not only assure an effective team approach to system wide goals, but also provide a simple and intelligible description of the direction of the Des Moines Public

Schools that is so necessary for continued public understanding and support."

In 1982, three Des Moines administrators interviewed numerous individuals at The University of Iowa to prepare three possible scenarios describing the 1980s. The scenarios were described as "unproven, assumed theories of how the future *might* be, which were designed to cause the reader to think about the available options under each set of circumstances." *(Oracle, Three Histories of the 1980s: Implications for Education,* Des Moines Independent Community School District: Department of Evaluation and Research, 1982). The three scenarios were written from three distinct perspectives: optimistic, pessimistic, and static. Each included implications for education in general and more specifically, the Des Moines Public Schools. The authors prepared *Oracle* as a tool to aid in exploring what the future might hold for the school district and to aid in seeking solutions to the problems that would arise under each set of circumstances.

Another milestone in the development of planning in the Des Moines Public Schools involved development and implementation of the Plan for Excellence. The basis of the plan was a model for improving student achievement framed during a two and one-half day meeting of educators and parents in 1981. After serious study the Board of Education authorized detailed planning to begin in 1983. Planning was accomplished over a period of eighteen months by a committee chaired by the Director of Evaluation and Research and consisting of the superintendent, two assistant superintendents and five other central office administrators. Beginning in September 1984, 33 study committees reviewed 55 components of the plan. On November 13, 1984, at the *First Annual Educational Forum,* reactions to committee reports were provided by eight "forum members." The Plan for Excellence was approved by the board in February of 1985 and implemented over a three year period from 1985 to 1988. The broad coverage of the Plan for Excellence and the lengthy process involved in planning and implementation were indicators of its relationship to a strategic planning process.

On October 4, 1988, the Board of Education directed the new superintendent, Dr. Gary Wegenke, "to review, revise and recommend a plan for establishing school district goals and objectives for 1989-90." To initiate this task, planning focused on three concepts: 1) a clear and concise statement of the school district mission, 2) goals and objectives established from information generated at both the building and central office levels, and 3) an emphasis on the efficient, effective and equitable use of limited district resources. These concepts were the foundation of strategic planning for the 1990s and beyond in the Des Moines Public Schools.

"Strategic Planning: i.e. a process and a discipline for facilitating the application of limited resources to competing educational needs in the context of a changing school district environment."
(Wegenke, 1988)

The essence of the strategic planning process is that program direction across the district is based on a careful analysis of program issues related to effectiveness (predetermined goals, objectives and action plans resulting in school improvement outcomes), efficiency (operating within limited district resources), and equity (fairness to all district participants).

A series of papers titled "Relating Human Action to Strategic Planning" was prepared by Gary Wegenke, Superintendent of Schools, and released between October 1988 and September 1990. These papers, listed below, helped initiate and define the strategic planning process for the Des Moines Public Schools.

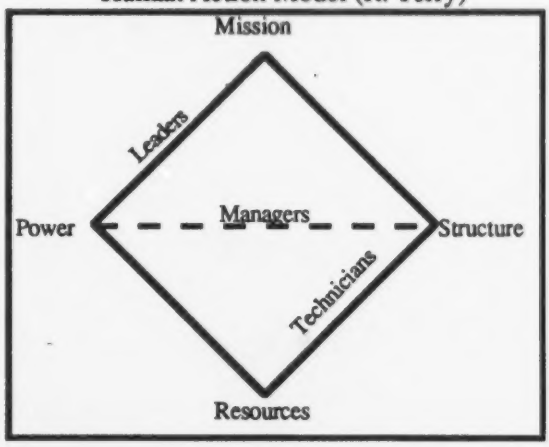
Paper	Publication Date
Focus on Mission	*October 1988*
Focus on Structure	*November 1988*
Focus on Structure and Resources	*January 1989*
Focus on Roles and Responsibilities	*May 1989*
Focus on Program Evaluation	*October 1989*
Focus on Central Office Reorganization	*October 1989-August 1990*
Focus on School-Based Management	*September 1990*

Other key events that have occurred in the process of implementing strategic planning in the Des Moines Public Schools include the following:

October 4, 1988 — The Board of Education directed the superintendent "to review, revise and recommend a plan for establishing school district goals and objectives for 1989-90."

December 21, 1988 — Dr. Robert Terry's "Human Action Model" was introduced.

Human Action Model (R. Terry)



January 3, 1989 — Inservice was held relating the "Human Action Model" to the concept of strategic planning for the district.

June 7, 1989 — District mission statement was approved.

September 15, 1989 — First *Strategic Planning Report* was distributed. An operational calendar for strategic planning was adopted.

October 23, 1989 — The first in-service for principals on analyzing school information bases and using these in identifying needs was held.

January 15, 1991 — Board of Education approved the concept of school-based management through shared decision-making and encouraged further policy and procedural developments.

August 6, 1991	Board of Education approved Policy Code 330: School-Based Management through Shared Decision-Making
February, 1992	School-Based Management through Shared Decision-Making Demonstration Project submits draft of a revised school improvement plan to the Board.

Note: A historical timeline detailing the implementation of strategic planning in the Des Moines Public Schools may be obtained from the Department of Information Management.

Policies, Standards, Regulations

The major legislation governing the assessment and strategic planning processes for the State of Iowa may be found in 280.12, and 280.18 of the Iowa Code and subrule 12.3(3), Iowa Administrative Code, enacted in 1989. All districts in the state submit the following information to the Iowa Department of Education annually in order to comply with this legislation:

- description of the process of determining needs and setting goals;
- statement of philosophy of the Board of Directors;
- listing of all district goals and a description of activities undertaken to reach each goal;
- identification of instruments and measures to assess progress toward achievement of goals and objectives and a schedule of district testing activities; and
- an annual assessment/progress report which covers operations of the district during the current year and outlines goals and objectives for the following year.

Improvements

Implementation of the strategic planning model has resulted in the following categories of district initiatives:

The district focus is on teaching and learning.

- The district focus is on teaching and learning processes and outcomes.
- The district assesses curriculum and instruction through program evaluation.
- The district continues to improve human resources through staff development.
- The district encourages leadership and management development through strategic planning.

- The district distributes resources effectively, efficiently and equitably.
- The district supports a positive learning environment by maintaining and upgrading facilities, materials, and equipment.
- The district encourages initiatives and planned change through the involvement of stakeholders.
- The district strengthens public and staff awareness and support of district programs.

Specific recent improvements noted within or assisted by the department include:

- standardized organization of district improvement plan and strategic planning committee meetings;
- development of model reports and in-servicing central staff for the preparation of program evaluations;
- continuing improvement of building improvement plans, especially in the development of action plans, writing objectives, and the inclusion of vision statements;
- refinement and use of an operational calendar for strategic planning;
- continuing improvement and expansion of the school information databases, providing expanded analyses, additional information and graphic presentations; and
- expansion of the strategic planning committee to include representatives from the board, Business Education Alliance, and parents.

Program Evaluation

The Department of Information Management provides leadership and direction for the district's program evaluation operation.

Organizational tasks include: 1) facilitating the district's program evaluation and survey activities to obtain information for decision-making and improvement of operations conducted within the district mission, and 2) implementing a system to ensure that program evaluation activities occur on schedule.

History

In 1979-80, the staff of the Department of Evaluation, Research and Testing included a director, three program evaluators, two evaluation assistants and a secretary. Programs evaluated during that school year included an Artist in Residence Program at Edmunds School, an Extended Day Kindergarten Program that provided for increased kindergarten instructional time at eleven buildings and the Gifted and Talented Program

that had recently been reorganized in all buildings. The department was also involved extensively in summarizing for the board the actions taken on the recommendations that were made in a study conducted the previous year by Peat, Marwick and Mitchell Company on the organizational structure and administrative effectiveness of the central office.

program evaluation in the '80s

Major evaluation activities during the 1980-81 school year included evaluation of the fine arts program at the Edmunds-Jefferson Schools and a research study "Title I Achievement as Related to Program and School Attendance," which provided information on mobility patterns of Title I students. The study won the award as the best research study from Division H of the American Educational Research Association. The department also conducted a survey involving the condition of schoolhouse roofs and the status of roof repairs throughout the Midwest and responded to a request by the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction to study the secondary vice-principalship. A major effort during the year was the data-gathering phase of an elementary "time on task" study. The study was partially funded through a grant from the National Institute of Education (NIE), and involved actual classroom observations of time on task throughout the year. The data were analyzed during 1981-82 and the results reported to district staff by means of a filmstrip/tape presentation. The final report to NIE was made in February 1983.

In 1982-83, Block Grant funds were first received through the Chapter II of the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act and the department was charged with reporting how the funds were spent as well as providing a description of the programs. During the same year, a study of the district's libraries and media centers was conducted which examined the age, condition and volume of student use of the book collections, and an evaluation of the English as a Second Language Program was conducted. The evaluations of Title I, Head Start, and Follow Through continued.

The guidance and counseling function of the district was examined in a major evaluation study during 1983-84. Another major study, this time requested by the Board of Education, looked at college success of recent high school graduates attending the three state Regents universities. The health curriculum (Seattle-Berkeley) was also evaluated in 1983-84 and in May 1984, a community telephone survey of district residents was conducted for the first time and used as a needs assessment.

The department was instrumental in conducting the first Educational Forum in November of 1984 with the School/Community Relations Department. Following the Educational Forum, the Department of Evaluation, Research and Testing became extensively involved in monitoring the activities associated with the Plan for Excellence. In carrying out this function, the department worked closely with an oversight committee of community representatives that reported annually for three years to the Board of Directors concerning implementation of the activities associated with the plan.

Programs for dropout prevention were first evaluated in 1986-87; and during the following year, 1987-88, a study of time on task involving a sample of high school students was conducted with the assistance of

Heartland Area Education Agency. During this same year, a study of staff absenteeism in the district replicated a study conducted ten years earlier.

In 1988-89, evaluation of dropout prevention programs continued. An In-School Suspension Program initiated the previous year was also evaluated as was Smoother Sailing, a counseling program for elementary students that operated in part by funds provided by the business community. Also, in 1988-89, the Department of Evaluation, Research and Testing undertook measurement of the impact of the Phase III Program by using the Stages of Concern questionnaire and conducting prescribed interviews with staff members who had participated in various staff development activities associated with the Phase III program, using the Levels of Use instrument.

During the 1989-90 school year, the implementation of the strategic planning model required all district program and service areas to prepare and formally present an evaluation report to the Board of Directors on a cyclical basis. Included in the cycle of evaluations, which takes approximately 2 1/2 years to complete, are 41 programs and service areas. A major change in function was that department directors and supervisors are now responsible for preparation of evaluation reports with technical assistance in all phases of the process provided by the Department of Information Management. An evaluation model centering around Context, Input, Process and Product was instituted to standardize the reporting format. The model, originated by Daniel Stufflebeam and several colleagues, has been in general use across the country since the late 1960s.

Policies, Standards, Regulations

The major legislation governing the evaluation, assessment and strategic planning processes for the State of Iowa may be found in 280.12, and 280.18 of the Iowa Code and subrule 12.3(3), Iowa Administrative Code, enacted in 1989. Copies of Codes 280.12 and 280.18 may be obtained from the Department of Information Management.

Des Moines Independent School District Board Policy: Series 600, Code 654, Evaluation, adopted July 17, 1990:

> "The Department of Evaluation and Research shall submit evaluation reports or abstracts to the Board of Directors for all special or periodic evaluations of programs under evaluation by that department. Testing results from objectives-based, criterion referenced or norm referenced tests shall be submitted to the Board of Directors in the form of a public brochure. A trend analysis of ITBS/ITED results shall also be provided each year such tests are administered. Additional or more detailed reports shall be available to the Board of Directors at their request."

Programs receiving funds from external agencies often establish standards for evaluation that deal with the type of information that needs to be gathered and the format for reporting the data to the funding agent. An example is the federal and Iowa Department of Education guidelines for reporting Chapter I evaluation information.

Improvements

Several improvements have occurred in the area of program evaluation in recent years:

- A standard model of program evaluation for the district that is useful in evaluating both learning and service areas was implemented.
- The importance of program evaluation in the district is being realized by the fact that all programs and service areas now prepare formal evaluations.
- All programs and service areas are regularly assessed by staff to examine the current and projected status of the area, identify needs, consider outcomes, and plan for the future.
- The Board of Directors currently receives a written copy of each of the program evaluation reports, hears an oral presentation of the evaluation, and has a worksession over related groups of the reports.

In July 1990, the title Department of Information Management replaced the Department of Evaluation, Research and Testing designation to indicate its additional assigned responsibilities and functions of strategic planning and improvement services, plus student information and student accounting. In the district organizational structure, the department was reassigned from the Educational Services Division to the Division of Management Services.

Assessment and Research

History

Dissatisfaction with standardized testing led to a two-year moratorium.

In the fall of 1978, the district's first testing coordinator was hired. This individual was also given the responsibility of coordinating the activities of the District Research Committee. Responsibility for the standardized testing program was transferred to the Department of Evaluation and Research from the Department of Guidance and Counseling. Due to a growing dissatisfaction with standardized testing, a study committee recommended a two-year moratorium (1978-79 and 1979-80) on all standardized (ITBS/ITED) testing. The 1979 examination of the testing program was the last major review of district testing until the 1989-90 school year. The criterion-referenced (objectives-based) testing program continued during the moratorium, as it was the only testing program in operation.

Standardized testing was renewed in the fall of 1980 for grades four through twelve. This procedure was followed for three years. In the fall of 1983, the district returned to testing grades four, six, eight, and ten.

In 1983 the format for reviewing external research proposals was changed, such that individuals submitted a written prospectus to the District Research Committee. The membership of the committee was also restructured to include central office representatives, teachers, counselors, and principals from each organizational level.

A new student performance-based assessment was introduced as part of the Plan for Excellence. Students were given topics from which they were to choose one and construct an essay. These tests were first given in grades five, eight, and eleven. Grade three was added in the fall of 1988.

A new student performance-based assessment was introduced as part of the Plan for Excellence.

Following the formation of the Des Moines Plan program, a series of Checkpoint tests (objectives-based tests resembling minimum competency tests) were developed for mathematics (grades 1, 3, 5, 8, and 11), and reading (grades 1, 3, 5, and 8) for student placement and program evaluation. To not overburden any one group of students with too many tests, the standardized testing program was revised to include students in grades 2, 4, 6, 7, and 10 (the off-years of Checkpoint testing). In addition, 1987-88 saw the beginning of local test processing, using scanners and computers in the buildings. By fall 1988, each building was equipped with a National Computer Systems (NCS) scanner, a Microsoft-Disk Operating System (MS-DOS) computer, and software for scanning their own tests and printing results immediately. They were also connected with Mid-Iowa Computer Center for electronic transfer of test data to facilitate district-wide analyses by central office staff.

By 1988 <u>all</u> schools had test scanners.

In 1990 the Department of Information Management was asked to study and recommend changes in the district testing program for consideration by the board. A 21 member committee met throughout the 1989-90 school year and into the fall of 1990 to finalize their recommendations. After numerous reviews and revisions by building and central office staff, the final recommendations were approved by the Board of Directors on June 18, 1991.

In the spring of 1991, the District Research Committee was reorganized to have all members serve a three-year term, with rotating membership for about one-third of the committee each year. This ensures stability in expertise and procedures while allowing new members to become accustomed to the procedures.

<u>Goals/Purposes</u>

The goal of the academic testing program is to improve teaching and to increase learning. Purposes of the program are to assess student learning, diagnose instructional need, and provide information for program evaluation. Specific objectives are to 1) allow the teacher to monitor student learning and make subsequent instructional decisions; 2) provide information to students, parents, and school personnel for making instructional decisions; 3) provide achievement data for conducting program evaluations; 4) provide achievement data as one component of student progress reporting; 5) provide necessary information to meet state and federal guidelines; and 6) insure that the academic programs of the Des Moines Public Schools compare favorably with those of other districts.

Policies, Standards, Regulations

Iowa Code 280.12 and 280.18

Series 600, Code 656, Research by Outside Organizations (July 5, 1983)
The primary responsibility of the Des Moines Independent Community School District is education of students and any cooperation in research is in that context. Consideration will be given all research proposals submitted by responsible researchers from recognized educational agencies meeting criteria. Particular consideration will be given those proposals where positive benefit to the school district is apparent.

Series 600, Code 657, Districtwide Testing Assessment (December 20, 1983)
In order to provide unbiased assessments of student academic growth, the Des Moines Independent Community School District will provide a districtwide testing program. Specialized testing will also be undertaken as part of unique, individual student instructional requirements and educational services.

Operational Practices

Students who are in regular subject area classrooms must take the objectives-based test at the end of the course. Primarily curriculum evaluation instruments, objectives-based test scores are also used to establish course grades, more at the high school level than at the lower levels. General policies regarding testing of students who are members of special populations follow.

tailoring the testing program to special populations..

Gifted and Talented. The Gifted and Talented program uses the *Torrance Test of Critical Thinking* and the *Test of Cognitive Abilities* as formal assessment instruments for selection. In addition, several informal tools are used, including parent and teacher checklists. ITBS scores are also used in some placement decisions.

Des Moines Plan. Checkpoint tests have been discontinued for grades 1 and 3. Checkpoint testing in grades 5 and 8 has been reduced to include only those students whom teachers identify as possibly needing Des Moines Plan services. Checkpoint testing of mathematics for grade 11 remains in effect for students who have not passed Algebra I.

Special Education. Students are evaluated in relation to referred difficulties. The *Special Education Manual of Policies and Procedures* outlines the process for testing students prior to placement and during three-year evaluations. Current national, state, and local trends emphasize functional assessment instead of traditional standardized testing of individual students referred for special education. Local norms in curriculum-based measurement have been developed for reading, math, and written expression, and can be used to monitor individual progress for these students. Parents of students in special education classifications may ask that their children be included in standardized testing activities.

Vocational and Career Education Programs. Students completing vocational or career education programs in the Des Moines Public Schools graduate with a competency certification in their elected career areas. Achieving these certificates requires the individual to demonstrate that they have mastered specified competencies in the particular vocational or career area. No change in the process through which students are evaluated is foreseen.

English as a Second Language (ESL). Students in the ESL program are individually assessed annually on the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) to determine their levels of oral language proficiency. Levels range from 1 (no English comprehension) to 5 or 6 (near native proficiency of oral English). Students who score at a BSM level of 1, 2 or 3 do not have sufficient English language skills to take standardized tests; therefore, only those students who score at a level 4 or higher on the BSM are included in the regular testing programs of the Des Moines Schools and Des Moines Plan classes. Students who score at a BSM level 5 or 6 are further assessed for exiting the program, using language assessment scales, classroom grades, and teacher judgment.

Improvements

Three primary areas of improvement in testing and research have been in the areas of technology, communications, and procedures:

- Technology. In the fall of 1988, all buildings had a scanner, an IBM-type computer, and test processing software for on-site processing of tests. This enabled teachers to get a report of student scores within a few minutes of scanning the tests. A more comprehensive report is available through Mid-Iowa Computer Center (MICC) within two days after electronically transferring the file to MICC for processing.

- Communications. Communications among the central office staff have greatly improved. It is a necessity that "the right hand know what the left hand is doing" to avoid sending conflicting messages. Mid-Iowa Computer Center plays a critical role in the processing of test data for district use. By working closely together, the department has been able to avoid several problems before they happen. Communications have also improved between the testing staff and the buildings. Building staff are developing a confidence that when they call, they will get an answer. In turn, the buildings are placing much more emphasis and care in the administration, data collection, and processing of their tests. Building staff have begun to realize the necessity of being exact with the technology involved in the processing, and are going to greater lengths to see that their duties are completed. The success of the testing program would definitely not be what it is were it not for the dedication of the building staffs.

The success of the testing program would definitely not be what it is were it not for the dedication of the building staffs.

- Procedures. The single, most important procedural improvement was the implementation of a master test development schedule.

The development of an objectives-based test generally takes two years from concept to first administration of the final product. Tests are then revised approximately every seven years, depending upon the instructional materials adoption calendar. By adhering to the test development schedule, the department and curriculum supervisors, are kept moving at a steady pace, thereby achieving the ultimate goal without rushing at the last minute to get things done and ensuring that an objectives-based test will be ready when it is needed. Only through a great deal of cooperation is this process achieved.

Student Information

History

The role of the Student Information section of the department has undergone many changes in recent years. Beginning many years ago, the Pupil Accounting and Records section of the Pupil Services Department was the agency responsible for the transfer of paper student records. The section has seen its role expanded over the years to one of being the primary generator of electronic student-related information for the district, while still retaining its original function.

*"From the time that free public schools were first organized, and financial aid provided in one form or another by state and local governments, certain school records from which reports may be made have been required by law." (**Pupil Accounting for Iowa Schools,** Iowa Department of Public Instruction, 1962).*

A major function of the Student Information section remains the prompt and accurate transfer of student records between the Des Moines Public Schools and schools in other districts. Records of school-age students who transfer or withdraw from school are kept on file until needed and copies are sent out when properly requested. If a student returns to a Des Moines school, that student's records are sent to the enrolling school.

Special education student folders are also maintained in the Student Information section. Each special education student has a folder that contains information of value to people in the district, as well as other agencies or schools, which may work with the student. Fall is the busiest time of the year for student records transfers. The section handles an average of 250 records per week from the middle of August through September. Requests for transcripts are received from other schools all over the world. Other requests come from businesses or colleges as well as the court system. Birth verification is another important service provided. Many times the district's records are the only legal documents available for such verification. At an earlier time the section also provided work permits and supervised the annual school census, but those functions have been transferred or discontinued.

Records are stored on microfilm.

Since the early 1960s the section has been archiving information on microfilm. Both transcript and birth record verification information is stored in the district's vault that is nearly full of microfilms of school records: North High School (1908-1987), Roosevelt High School (1924-1985), Lincoln High School (1923-1984), East High School (1904-1985), Hoover High School (1967-1985), Des Moines Technical High School (1942-1986). High schools maintain a student's permanent paper record for five years, then send it to the Student Information section for microfilming. The section also stores films of Admission, Discharge, and Promotion (ADP) cards from 1900-1949 as well as transfer and drop records dating back to 1917 in the vault.

moving to electronic records

The transition to electronic records was begun in 1988. Two Macintosh IIs were purchased for the records area and the position of Student Accounting Specialist was created and filled in August. The first area of concern was using the computers to improve the handling of student records. The staff began using the computer to track records requests and print mailing labels. Next, a very large paper index file of special education students was entered into the computer. When that was finished, the staff began merging birth record information from another paper file into the same file. This is a continuing project as new birth record card information is entered into the computer rather than filed and the program continues to grow and develop. Having index files on computer makes it much easier to know exactly where the paper is, where it has been, and when to microfilm it for long-term storage.

making MICC data useable

The Student Information section serves as a liaison with Mid-Iowa Computer Center (MICC). Formerly, a printout with basic demographic information on district students was received twice a year. This document would nearly fill the drawer of a file cabinet. In the fall of 1988 information was first downloaded to micro computers. This opened a whole realm of new possibilities. A student can be located by using several different criteria, not just the last name. Telephone number, address or home room, and first name can also be used. For example, early in the fall of 1990, a kindergartner rode a bus all the way to the bus garage. The only valid information that could be understood from the child was the first name. Loading locations were also known. When staff from the transportation department called, it was easy to find the student record that included address, guardian name and phone number. Summary reports are generated much more quickly and accurately. New information is downloaded about once each month during the school year and the file as it exists on official count day and at the end of each year is preserved for planning purposes.

Another area of responsibility for Student Information is to serve as network administrator for the computer network in the central office building. In August 1988 the computers in the central office were wired (networked) together so they could share printers. With the later addition of a file server, over one hundred users (computers) now store and share information on the file server. The network greatly enhances the value of the student file that is downloaded from MICC. Authorized users can access student information from any computer in the building on the file server.

When the EDULOG computer program was purchased, another major area of responsibility was added to the Student Information Section. The EDULOG hardware includes five high speed computers. Two are located in the Transportation Center. The other three are located in the Student Information area. One is on-line to MICC and can be used to download mainframe information for access by the other four computers. In addition to downloading student information, the Student Accounting Specialist maintains boundary information and generates text and graphic reports based on geographic and demographic criteria.

EDULOG is a valuable planning tool.

Improvements

A number of improvements in Student Information have been made possible through the implementation of technology.

Data in the MICC student accounting database is printed on a variety of forms rather than repeatedly typing the data. Examples include permanent records, destination of graduates forms, special education exit forms, senior letters, special education transportation forms, and the transportation report. Reports are more accurate because buildings use their Mid-Iowa information in a variety of ways.

Enrollment, Minority Enrollment, and Withdrawal Reports have been redesigned and graphics have been included.

Microfilm equipment that used dry silver paper (a possible health hazard) has been replaced by a more economical plain paper reader/printer.

EDULOG has replaced pin maps for most geographic planning. It is particularly helpful in the fifth to sixth grade and eighth to ninth grade transitions.

INPUT EVALUATION

- Budget and Sources of Revenue

The operational budget for the Department of Information Management includes line items pertaining to program evaluation, strategic planning, testing and research, and student information, though these areas are not listed separately.

The budget for the Department of Information Management is approximately 0.4 percent of the district's operating budget.

The appropriate line items and amounts budgeted for Fiscal Year 1992 are shown below. These figures exclude personnel costs. The budget for the Department of Information Management is approximately 0.4 percent of the district's operating budget.

ITEM	FY 1992 BUDGET	EXPENDITURES*
Consulting Service**	$72,335.00	$24,280.79
Standardized Testing Program	16,000.00	10,763.40
Printed Supplies	18,830.00	5,418.83
General Supplies	11,320.00	5,768.60
Temporary Help	12,400.00	6,906.19
Institution Dues	1,430.00	1,355.00
Periodicals	2,500.00	2,009.13
In-district Travel	3,600.00	2,168.52
Out of District Travel	4,150.00	2,026.70
TOTAL	$142,565.00	$60,697.16

*As of March, 1992

**Includes test administration and development, Mid-Iowa Computer Center charges, surveys, microcomputer upgrades, and software and equipment maintenance.

Human Resources

The following positions in the Department of Information Management are filled by persons who perform duties only in the areas of program evaluation, strategic planning, testing and research, and student information. The fulltime equivalency (FTE) and FY1992 dollar cost for each of these positions is indicated. Additional departmental staff will be reported in the program evaluation for technology/telecommunications.

TITLE	F.T.E.	SALARY ($)
Director of Information Management	0.5	$28,008.00*
Program Evaluator (Eval., Surveys, Planning)	1.0	40,376.00
Evaluation Specialist	0.5	16,283.00*
Program Evaluator (Testing and Research)	1.0	41,751.00
Testing Technician	1.0	19,753.00
Student Accounting Specialist	1.0	30,001.00
Secretary	4.0	63,479.00
TOTAL	9.0	$239,651.00

*The Evaluation Specialist and the Director of Information Management are full-time equivalent positions who also work in the area of technology. Only one-half of these salaries are included in the total.

Cost of In-service/Staff Development

Department of Information Management professional and clerical staff attend the Des Moines Public Schools Professional Educators Day annually. In addition, staff members attend various in-district staff development classes as appropriate for learning new skills and applications. Costs associated with participation in district in-services during 1990-91 were approximately $435.00 and consumed approximately 100 hours.

Composition test scoring involves several classroom teachers for which the Department of Information Management funds one-half day substitutes for teachers involved in the project. Six elementary teachers were supported for three sessions and two middle school teachers were supported for five sessions each for a total of 28 one-half day substitutes at a cost of approximately $1,000.

The Department of Information Management conducts in-services for appropriate audiences each year that provide information on various components of the strategic planning process such as program evaluation and school information base interpretation. Cost of these workshops that generally involve one-half day twice a year is, for the most part, limited to printing of materials for distribution.

Staff members of the Department of Information Management maintain professional memberships in various national organizations and their state affiliates as appropriate. Attendance at national or state meetings of these organizations when possible is not only beneficial for the purpose of receiving training and information in state of the art methods, but have also afforded staff members an opportunity to deliver presentations and impart information to others on activities occurring within the Des Moines district. Additional information on participation in professional organizations may be found in the "Process" section of this report.

Materials in Use by the Department

- 16mm microfilm cartridges and 45 megabyte removeable cartridges for student records
- Software: FileMaker, FileMaker Pro, Wingz, Excel, 4th Dimension, Microsoft Works, Microsoft Word, Core, Edulog, CRICKET Graph, MORE (for desktop presentations), Hypercard, Springboard Publisher, and SPSS (both MICC and microcomputer versions)
- Objectives based and standardized testing materials
- Instructional Management System (IMSplus)
- CIMS, Pentamation, MacSchool, and Express (The National Center for Education Statistics Electronic Transfer of Student Records) are being examined.

Equipment in Use by the Department

- Macintosh computers
- DOS/Unix computers
- LaserJet Series II printer
- Microfilm camera for student records

- Reader/printer for microfilm
- Copy machine (A second machine is rented during rush season.)
- Modems
- Lektriever for paper special education records
- Vault for storage of microfilmed student records
- Plotter
- Uninterruptible power supply for EDULOG
- Tape backup for EDULOG
- Scanner and printer for scoring documents and producing score reports

Equipment being examined includes network upgrades, an optical disk system, and state-of-the-art computers.

Community Resources

Community resources are used during Composition Test scoring. Included are some teachers on released time, parents and retired teachers. Scorers are paid at a rate ranging from $7.25 to $10.25 per hour depending on their level of responsibility. Clerks are paid at a rate of $6.25 per hour.

Each year, over 50 individuals assist in the scoring of compositions.

Space Allocations

The Department of Information Management maintains a large test storage and processing facility at the district Transportation and Food Service building consisting of one large room and two smaller rooms. It is also the site at which the Composition Test scoring is conducted.

Within the department office is a workroom which contains bins for sorting completed test documents in preparation for processing. Student records on microfilm are stored in a vault; paper records are kept in a locked room inside another locked room.

The department maintains a small research library, stocked with a variety of educational books and periodicals. They are available for checkout by anyone doing research or seeking information.

PROCESS EVALUATION

Strategic Planning

The process of strategic planning for school-based management through shared decision-making (SBM/SDM) is illustrated by the circular model in Figure 1, page 2. The discussion that follows the model describes the involvement of buildings in the overall process as they examine their responsibility statements and school information bases, identify and prioritize needs, and develop school improvement plans. In a top-down, bottom-up management system, the district improvement plan is based, in part, upon consideration of needs identified at the school level. Central office staff responsibility statements are also developed with attention to needs expressed in school improvement plans.

"Many times it is not the solution to the problem that matters so much as the process of arriving at an outcome."--Guy Benveniste

The Department of Information Management is heavily involved in the evaluation component of the strategic planning process. The department is responsible for collecting and compiling outcome information from the evaluation of objectives and goals contained within school and district improvement plans and from the central office staff's responsibility statements. This information is printed in the annual *Strategic Planning Report*. The department maintains two "calendars" related to strategic planning: a historical timeline outlining key events from the institution of the strategic planning effort to the present and a yearly calendar which lists in more detail events for the current year. The most recent copy of each calendar may be obtained from the Department of Information Management. The district Strategic Planning Committee is a group of 25 teachers, administrators, board members, parents, business persons, and other employees. This group meets monthly during each school year to consider and coordinate a variety of matters pertaining to strategic planning. The Director of Information Management chairs the committee.

Program Evaluation

The current program evaluation system centers around the district's needs for evaluative information. Evaluation of all district programs and service areas was instituted in April of 1990. Prior to that time, evaluations had been written for programs whose external funding source(s) required evaluation information and for other programs in which the district invested funds and desired evaluative information. One of the papers in the series entitled "Relating Human Action to Strategic Planning" (Wegenke, 1989) stated that "to successfully monitor the effectiveness, equity and efficiency of programs taking place in the district, a program evaluation model or thought process needs to be in place." The process adopted by the district is the CIPP model (CIPP is an acronym for: context, input, process, and product) which was developed by Dr. Daniel Stufflebeam and others in the late 1960s. According to the paper (Wegenke, 1989), the model "may prove to be a useful tool for assessing the quality of programming in specific content or service areas." There are currently 41 programs and service areas in the district for which evaluations are being prepared.

The current program evaluation system centers around the district's needs for evaluative information.

The first cycle of reports began with the presentation of an evaluation of the mathematics program to the board on April 17, 1990. The last report in the cycle will be completed around March 1993. Written reports are submitted to several groups for review to improve the quality before submission to the board. The steps outlined below are followed sequentially for all reports. The Department of Information Management facilitates all stages of the process. A master calendar outlining each of the steps is maintained, revised as necessary, and distributed regularly by the Department of Information Management.

Activity	Prior to Board Presentation
Arrangements for media/graphics arts services	3 months
Critique of written draft by Dept. of Information Management	5 weeks
Presentation of written report to Division Cabinet	4 weeks
Presentation of written report to Administrative Council	3 weeks
Written report to board for information	2 weeks
Oral presentation to board	
Board Worksession to discuss needs/answer questions	2-6 weeks following presentation

Assessment

Administration of academic tests centers around the district's needs for student outcome information.

Administration of academic tests centers around the district's needs for student outcome information. The process of developing an objectives-based test from conception to first administration contains 24 steps and covers a two year period. The process includes activities by subject area supervisors, teachers and testing personnel. The entire first year is spent on development and producing a pilot test, and the second year on data analyses and producing a final product to be administered for the first time at the end of the year. The objectives-based tests are used as part of student evaluation and grading at the middle and high school levels and as curriculum evaluation tools for grades 2-12.

IMSplus provides formative information for instructional decision making.

While the objectives-based tests provide primarily summative information (at the end of a course or school year), the introduction of an Instructional Management System (IMSplus) is providing formative information (throughout the year) for instructional decision-making. For standardized tests, objectives-based tests and the district composition test, general procedures are the same: test order forms are sent to buildings, requests are returned, tests are provided and administered in the buildings, data are scanned and processed, and reports are generated. The timing of the process, however, differs for each type of test.

ITBS/ITED

For standardized tests (ITBS/ITED), student counts are taken from the student data base at Mid-Iowa Computer Center. Tests are ordered from the Iowa Testing Programs in Iowa City. After administration, test forms are returned to the Department of Information Management. They are checked for scanner readability, building and district information sheets are completed, and the tests are packed and shipped to Iowa City for processing by National Computer Systems. The processing of the tests takes between two and four weeks. After the tests are processed, reports are generated and returned to the Department of Information Management, where the reports are sorted for distribution to building principals. The Iowa Testing Programs also returns a data tape, which is entered into the mainframe computer at MICC for further processing and disaggregation.

One aspect of the district testing program that has increased efficiency and effectiveness has been the use of bar-coded labels on student response sheets of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. The labels, similar to a Universal Product Code (UPC) symbol on a food item at a grocery store, contains pertinent information for each student who takes the test. This drastically reduces the time it takes buildings and central office staff to check student sheets for the required information. It also allows more efficient and accurate analysis of data, since the student information is identical to the student data files at Mid-Iowa Computer Center.

Objectives-based tests are end-of-course tests. They are designed to assess student achievement of the critical objectives of a given curriculum, as identified by the subject-area teachers and supervisors. After tests are administered, they are scanned in the buildings, where results are immediately available to the teachers. Test data are then electronically transferred to MICC in order to combine data from the same test for all buildings for district-level reports. After district-level reports are generated and checked for accuracy, data tapes are "loaded" into the district test data base. This data base is accessible by each school for their students.

For composition testing, after tests are administered, they are sorted and matched with computer-generated score sheets. The scoring involves approximately 60 individuals, mostly retired teachers who are trained to judge the qualitative aspects of the students' compositions. To avoid bias, each essay is read by two scorers, and discrepancies are resolved by a third reading. The scoring process takes approximately four weeks of one-half days.

current testing program

The 1991-92 testing program, approved by the Board of Directors on June 18, 1991, is shown below:

- Standardized Testing:
  ITBS, grades 3, 4, 6, & 7 (all students)
  ITED, grade 10 (matrix sampling procedure for each subtest)
  ITED, grades 9-12 (a voluntary Saturday testing session is held for students desiring a full set of scores)
- Objectives-based Testing:
  -Elementary School: 14 tests in math, language arts, science and social studies
  -Use of computerized Instructional Management System (IMSplus) is being installed at the elementary level to facilitate

progress monitoring of students in the math and reading curricula.
-Middle School: 19 tests in math, language arts, science, social studies, and foreign language
-High School: 26 tests in math, language arts, science, social studies, home economics, and foreign language

- Performance-based Testing:
  Composition test, grades 3, 5, 8, & 11 (all students). Several writing tasks for each grade.

During 1990-91, 68 different objectives-based tests were administered to district students. Assuming one hour per test, and based on the fall 1990 official enrollment, a 180-day school year, and a six-hour student day (32,739,120 total student hours), 85,043 hours were devoted to student testing (an average of twenty-six one-hundredths of one percent of the school year). While it is acknowledged that some groups are not tested and others are assessed more than the average, the greatest concern for revision of the district testing program was the concentrated amount of time devoted to testing within a short period (end-of-year). This estimate, however, should be viewed as conservative.

The average amount of time devoted to district testing of each student is less than one percent of the school year.

During 1990-91, the ITBS or ITED was administered to 9,825 students in grades 2, 4, 6, 7, and 10. Assuming five hours per student and based only on those students taking the test, a 180-day school year, and a six-hour student day (10,611,000 student-hours), 49,125 hours were devoted to testing (forty-six one-hundredths of one percent of the school year).

During 1990-91, the district composition test was administered to 9,277 students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. Assuming two hours per student and based only on those students taking the test, a 180-day school year, and a six-hour student day (10,019,160 student-hours), 18,554 hours were devoted to testing (nineteen one-hundredths of one percent of the school year).

Projections for 1991-92, for each type of test, are these:

- Objectives-based testing: 56,693 student-hours (seventeen one-hundredths of one percent of the school year). This figure reflects reduction due to matrix sampling of elementary science and social studies, reduction in checkpoint testing, and elimination of testing in grade 1.

- Standardized testing: 49,653 student-hours (forty one-hundredths of one percent of the school year, for the students tested). This figure reflects some reduction due to ITED matrix sampling for grade 10.

- Composition testing: 17,862 student-hours (nineteen one-hundredths of one percent of the school year, for the students tested)

Based on these estimates, if each student took all tests for that grade level, the average amount of time devoted to district testing of each student would be less than one percent of the school year.

Research

The District Research Committee serves as a guardian against inappropriate use of time for district staff and students for research projects. The district, as an educational institution, is supportive of educational research efforts by both district staff and external parties. However, the primary obligation is to ensure that those parties conducting research with district staff or students have projects that will answer the questions that are being asked, enhance the educational process in the Des Moines Public Schools, and will not excessively intrude on staff and/or students.

The committee meets five times during the school year. The committee convenes to discuss and act upon each request submitted by interested researchers. Ethical principles for the use of human subjects in research, established by the American Psychological Association (APA), are used, in part, as the foundation for the review process. Following the decision, a letter to the researcher is signed by the committee chair and the Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, informing the researcher of the committee's decision, and if not fully accepted, the issues that must be addressed to be reconsidered.

Projects may be approved, conditionally approved, or rejected. Researchers of approved projects may contact buildings as stated in the proposals. Researchers of conditionally approved projects must submit requested changes to the committee chair for a second review (which may include additional review by a subset of committee members) and recommendation to the Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning. Researchers of rejected projects may not contact school staff. If desired, they may address any issues indicated in the rejection letter and resubmit the proposal for the next research committee meeting.

Provisions are in place through which some projects are exempt from the review process. Projects exempt from review include:

- Studies conducted by staff within the district as part of program evaluations.
- Data collection used to evaluate building objectives.
- Projects that are teacher-initiated and involve one's own classroom or are carried out within one's own building (with the principal's approval).
- Selected requests for participation in studies from federal or state agencies (or their contractees). These studies are generally approved by the Superintendent or his designee, and buildings are asked to cooperate by providing the data needed.

Student Information

Schools, businesses and former students request records by U.S. mail, bag mail, phone mail, facsimile transmission (FAX), or in person. Mail or phone requests are usually processed within three days, but during the busiest season in September, processing time is about ten days. When people request records in person, they are usually helped within a few minutes. FAXed requests are filled via FAX the same day. Records of current students must be located, copied, mailed, and filed. Records of former students must be printed from microfilm and mailed. Annually the

records of students born within a given year are pulled. Information that must be kept permanently is stored on microfilm. The film is checked and stored and the paper is shredded. The camera in the area is also used by both Payroll and Human Resources departments.

Information compiled about special education students is filed in paper folders at the central office. Professional special education staff check out the folders as they work with students. Copies of a student's records are requested when a student leaves the district or is served by another agency.

Many responsibilities are ongoing and predictable. For example, the volume of work in September is several times that of the remainder of the year. Temporary help must be used during that period. Numerous state and district reports must be prepared annually.

Planning responsibilities for student records include budgeting, preparing for annual projects and improving the services provided to customers.

The first problem is to answer the question "What do they really want to know?" The next problem involves locating the information, i.e. is it contained in a published annual report, in a building database, on a personal computer file or on a tape at MICC? When necessary, the information is reformatted in order to answer the questions.

The first problem is to answer the question "What do they really want to know?"

Current Year Goals/Objectives

District Goals

The following goals in the 1991-92 District Improvement Plan relate to the Department of Information Management, exclusive of technology and telecommunications.

"Everything must degenerate into work if anything is to happen." --Peter Drucker

Goal 8 improve curriculum, curriculum development processes and instruction based upon program evaluation and prioritization of needs

conclude the first complete round of program evaluations for all subject areas, departments and divisions

develop a management system to review and prioritize recommendations from program evaluations

Goal 9 improve the quality and usefulness of instructional information

implement a revised program of student assessment

expand disaggregation of information provided buildings

improve information base on "at risk" students

Goal 11 continue to improve the district's strategic planning initiative for SBM/SDM

Responsibility Statements

Director of Information Management

The responsibility of the Director of Information Management is to provide leadership and direction for the district's strategic planning, technology, program evaluation, testing/assessment, research and student information operations.

The organizational tasks performed include: (1) providing planning support for the Superintendent of Schools in the management of the district's strategic planning and school-based management for shared decision-making program; (2) development and adoption of building and district improvement plans; (3) implementation and monitoring of the district-wide assessment and program evaluation programs to meet the management information needs of the Board, staff and public; (4) coordinating the district's instructional and administrative technology initiatives; and (5) interacting with other district staff, the community, the media, and state and national organizations to carry out the mission of the district.

The Director of Information Management reports to the Associate Superintendent for Management Services and serves as a member of the Administrative Council. He chairs both the Strategic Planning Committee and Technology Committee as well as the Technology Advisory Committee. He directly supervises the Coordinator of Technology, the Program Evaluator for Testing and Research, the Program Evaluator for Evaluation, Surveys, and Planning and the Student Accounting Specialist.

Program Evaluator for Evaluation, Surveys, and Planning and Evaluation/Technology Specialist

The responsibility of the Program Evaluator: Evaluation, Surveys, and Planning is to provide leadership and direction for the district's program evaluation operation, to provide consultation and technical assistance in the design, administration and interpretation of results from district surveys and to provide support to the Director of Information Management in administering the district's strategic planning and school-based management//shared decision-making programs (SBM/SDM).

The organizational tasks to be performed include monitoring the district's program evaluation and survey activities to obtain information for decision-making to improve the operations contained within the district's mission; monitoring and providing planning support in the district's strategic planning and SBM/SDM programs by implementation of a system to ensure that strategic planning and program evaluation activities occur on schedule; providing planning support and technical assistance in the development of building objectives and action plans; and interacting with other district staff, the community and state and national organizations to carry out the mission of the district.

The administrator reports to the Director of Information Management and supervises the Evaluation Specialist's duties in the area of program evaluation that comprise one-half of that individual's assigned time.

The Evaluation/Technology Specialist assists with strategic planning and program evaluation in the district. Key responsibilities of this position include providing technical assistance to building and central office staff in development of improvement plans and responsibility statements; coordinating (with the Student Accounting Specialist) the development and distribution of school information bases; assisting in the design, data analysis, and interpretation of results from surveys and other assessment instruments.

Program Evaluator for Testing and Research and Testing Technician

The responsibility of the Program Evaluator for Testing and Research is to coordinate the district's testing program and facilitate the review and completion of external research activities.

Organizational tasks to be performed include coordinating the implementation of a revised district academic testing plan that includes standardized, criterion-referenced, and performance-based assessments; coordinating the administration and processing of district tests and reporting results to facilitate the information needs of district staff; coordinating the activities of the District Research Committee; collaborating with subject area supervisors on test development and implementation; providing ongoing training for district staff on test processing and assessment issues; and consulting with district personnel on assessment issues or on research activities as the need arises.

The Program Evaluator for Testing and Research reports to the Director of Information Management, serves as a member of the Technology Consultation Committee and chairs the District Research Committee. The position directly supervises the Testing Technician, and collaborates with the Coordinator of Technology and the Program Evaluator for Evaluation, Surveys, and Planning on issues integrating testing, technology, and research and evaluation.

The Testing Technician assists the Program Evaluator for Testing and Research with all facets of the testing and research activities conducted within the district. The position has primary responsibility for managing the test storage facility, organizing the ordering, distribution and processing of student test data, and providing test processing training and technical assistance to building personnel. Other activities include test development and production and preparation and distribution of test results to the appropriate individuals.

Student Accounting Specialist

The responsibility of the Student Accounting Specialist is to coordinate the handling of student records to facilitate transitions between schools and employers, to furnish planning data, and to serve as system administrator of two computer networks.

The organizational tasks to be performed include management of the student records section, exploration of relevant new technologies, and completion of annual district and state reports. State reports include *Certified Enrollment, Basic Educational Data Survey,* enrollment and attendance

sections of *Local Education Agency (LEA) Certified Annual Financial Report, and End of Year Non-Fiscal Survey*. District reports include enrollment, minority enrollment, and withdrawal reports as well as sections of the school information bases.

The specialist reports to the Director of Information Management, serves on the Mid-Iowa Pupil Accounting Oversight Committee, co-chairs the district's student records procedures committee, and supervises a clerical staff of three. The clerical staff handle in-district and out-of-district student records requests and maintain the files of special education students.

In-service/Staff Development

During August and September, two workshops are presented by the department on strategic planning and program evaluation. In August, a meeting is held for all building principals to distribute school information bases and to review their important roles in the strategic planning process. In September, a one-half day workshop is held to provide authors of future evaluation reports with information about preparation of reports. In September of 1990, this workshop was designed especially for those preparing reports in academic areas, while the 1991 workshop focused on service area reports. Emphasis has been placed upon the part program evaluation plays in the strategic planning process.

Staff members of the Department of Information Management belong to several of professional organizations. When possible, state and national meetings of these organizations are attended and presentations are made at these meetings.

Organizations to which various Department of Information Management staff belong:

- American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- Iowa Educational Research and Evaluation Association (IEREA)
- Directors of Research and Evaluation (DRE)
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
- Iowa Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (IASCD)
- Institute of School Executives (ISE)
- Iowa "No Name" Evaluators (an informal organization of individuals involved in program evaluation in Iowa)
- Iowa Computer Using Educators (ICUE)
- Phi Delta Kappa (PDK)
- American Association of School Administrators (AASA)
- American Evaluation Association
- Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)
- National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME)
- American Home Economics Association (AHEA)
- American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD)
- North American Society for Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity (NASPSPA)
- National Guild of Piano Teachers

Examples of professional meetings and workshops attended recently include:

State and national meetings are attended and presentations are made.

- Education Commission of the States/National Assessment of Education Progress, 1990
- NWEA Writing and Portfolio Assessment Institute, 1990
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) annual conference, 1990, 1991
- AASA/National Academy: The New Central Office Role, 1991
- Iowa Curriculum and Instruction Conference, 1990, 1991*
- Iowa Educational Research and Evaluation Association Annual Conference, 1991*
- Levels of Use of an Innovation Inservice, 1990
- Innovation Configuration Training, 1990
- Learning and Assessment: Focus on Results, (workshop), 1991
- 4th Dimension Software Training, 1991
- Iowa No-name Evaluators Conference,1991*
- Iowa Computer Using Educators (ICUE) Annual Conference, 1991
- MacSchool Training, 1991
- Professional Educators Conference, 1990, 1991*
- ISE Technology Conference
- NCREL Technology Exposition Conference, 1990
- ISE: Demographic of Educational Change, 1992
- ExPRESS Workshop, 1992
- Elementary-Secondary Education Management Information Systems: State and Local Models of Excellence, 1992

*Presentation was made

The Department of Information Management also holds monthly departmental meetings that are attended by all staff for the purpose of discussing and reviewing current and future projects, activities, and calendars.

Management Systems

Over the past decade technology has become indispensable in all phases of information management activities. The increasing pervasiveness of technology has had a major impact on the speed of information transfer and productivity.

Over the past decade technology has become indispensable in all phases of information management activities.

Faster computers and application-specific software have increased the production of tests on the computer (both text and graphics parts of tests). In addition, it has enabled modifications of tests in the development process to be achieved relatively easily. Copies produced on laser printers are camera-ready for duplication at printing facilities.

Since each building has a scanner for test processing, results are immediately available to teachers. In addition, since each building's computer (used for scanning) is networked to MICC, test data can be electronically transferred to MICC for developing district-level reports. In some instances, data transferred to MICC can be brought down onto a computer in the Department of Information Management and specific analyses can be run on the microcomputer (saving hundreds of dollars in mainframe computer costs). Districtwide test files (such as ITBS files from Iowa City and objectives-based test files) created at MICC can also be

transferred to department microcomputers and disaggregated for entry into building databases.

With the adoption of the Instructional Management System (IMSplus) software for classroom management in reading and mathematics, student achievement and developmental progress can be continuously monitored. This provides information to teachers to enhance the instructional process by diagnosing students' instructional needs and encourages reteaching concepts.

Student Information uses phone mail, large computer databases, a FAX machine, and a plain paper reader/printer as well as computer generated letters, forms and labels. A microfilm camera in the area needs to be replaced, probably by a different technology. Most of the work done by the Student Accounting Specialist is technology related, either using technology to complete a project or studying how to accomplish the objectives more efficiently and effectively.

Several devices have been developed to assist the department in managing its functions. The strategic planning master calendar indicates the dates of important events in the strategic planning process: past, present, and future. Included are dates of Strategic Planning Committee meetings, dates of program evaluation presentations and worksessions, and due dates for submission of school improvement plans and central office responsibility statements. There is also a program evaluation calendar that indicates for all programs and service areas the due date of all activities pertaining to the program evaluation report. As a backup to the calendar, an individual notification is sent to each report author approximately three months before the board presentation outlining each step in the process, repeating the due dates, and offering assistance.

Two management systems are used by the Program Evaluator for Testing and Research and the Testing Technician. First, the Test Development Chart is a "wall chart" of tests at various stages in the development process, with deadline dates for completion of specific phases. The second is a master activity calendar for the entire school year. It contains deadlines for specific activities in order to complete specific tasks. The calendar is reviewed and updated as needed for additions or changes. The use of this calendar facilitates time management and the successful completion of required tasks.

PRODUCT EVALUATION

Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning is moving the district into the 21st century.

The Director of Information Management chairs the Strategic Planning Committee. Some of the major accomplishments of the committee during the past three years have included:

- development of the district mission statement
- adoption of a new model of program evaluation for all programs and service areas in the district
- development of the plan of distribution for the instructional support levy
- development of drafts of the annual District Improvement Plan
- creation of the School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making (SBM/SDM) Coordinating Council to review and coordinate all district efforts related to school based management

Related specific outcomes of the strategic planning process for which the Department of Information Management had major responsibilities included the following:

- School objectives have improved. All School Improvement Plan drafts have been reviewed and critiqued. Feedback has been provided to principals and revisions have shown considerable improvement. Building objectives are topically sorted and distributed to all buildings to encourage networking among buildings that have similar written objectives.

- Accomplishments by central staff of their responsibility statement objectives were reviewed and critiqued; responsibility statements for the following year were reviewed and critiqued.

- Responses to all objectives in School Improvement Plans were reviewed and critiqued.

- The third *Strategic Planning Report* was prepared and distributed in September of 1991. This document is the reference manual for strategic planning in the district. It also supplies at least 80 percent of the documentation for an annual report to the Department of Education concerning sections 280.12 and 280.18, The Code and subrule 12.3(3), Iowa Administrative Code.

- The *State of the Schools Report* was coordinated by the Department of Information Management. The format for this report was altered to include data related to the contexts, inputs, processes, products and future plans of the district. Whenever possible the data were disaggregated and a historical perspective was provided for each illustration. Multiple statements of analysis were written.

The director serves on the SBM/SDM Coordinating Council. This group includes a parent representative, teachers, principals and central office administrators. The primary responsibility of this council is to coordinate, review and provide leadership for all district efforts related to school-based management. Major activities carried out by the council during the 1991-92 school year included:

- identification and reporting on all separate SBM/SDM initiatives
- development of a communication plan for stakeholders
- incorporation of Phase III SBM/SDM activities into the district's efforts
- definition of the language of SBM/SDM
- initiation of a SBM/SDM Expectations Checklist
- review of SBM/SDM training plans
- development of waiver process
- examination of the locus of specific decisions

The Department of Information Management prepares, distributes, and reviews school information bases each year, usually in August. Special emphasis was placed on changes in format from the previous school information base and in providing suggestions for interpretation of information. There were 63 school information bases created in 1991, including 41 for elementary schools plus Smouse and Cowles, 10 middle schools plus Orchard Place, and five high schools plus the two alternative high schools, Central Campus, and Van Meter. Building specific information provided in information bases included:

- 1990-91 school improvement plan responses
- 1991-92 school improvement plan objectives
- definition of terms used in information bases
- student characteristics and enrollment
- student achievement information disaggregated by gender, race and economic level
- average daily attendance
- student suspensions
- staff information
- facility information
- computer inventory
- special program information
- proposed destination of high school seniors and the college freshman success of the district's seniors at the three Iowa regent universities and the Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC)

Program Evaluation

District Improvement Plan Goal 8 (1991-92) states that the district will "improve curriculum, curriculum development processes and instruction based upon program evaluation and prioritization of needs." The following outcomes relate to this goal:

- The amount of useful information regarding curricular areas, programs and departments has reached a level never before achieved at least in the preceding 20 years.

The program evaluations have become the data bases for academic and service areas in the district.

- The Department of Information Management staff has presented several workshops on a prototype to be used for preparation of evaluation reports. Two prototypes have been constructed, one to guide the process of report writing in academic areas and the other to guide the process for service areas. The first prototype was disseminated in September of 1990. The second prototype (for service areas) was distributed in September of 1991.

The Department of Information Management has monitored the preparation and presentation of 29 program evaluation reports. There will be 12 additional program evaluations to complete the first cycle of program evaluations. The final report in the cycle is scheduled for presentation on March 3, 1993.

- A master schedule of program evaluations has been prepared including due dates for each step and procedures to be followed.

- Technical assistance to authors has included assistance in graphics and interpretation of data. All written report drafts have been critiqued by at least two individuals in the department before presentation to any other group.

- The Department of Information Management, in concert with the Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, has developed a process to prioritize needs identified from program evaluation reports. Authors rank and provide cost estimates for implementation of needs. The intent is to provide useful input for budget development and to deal with competing needs and limited resources.

The Department of Information Management staff has provided assistance in evaluation design, data analysis, surveys and interpretation for projects such as:

- Human Resources Management Substitute Usage Survey
- Human Resources Survey
- Smoother Sailing Program
- Guidance and Counseling Department Self Study, including the Affective Education Curriculum Mapping Survey

Assessment

The district's testing staff works with the subject area supervisors to develop quality assessment instruments. During the 1990-91 school year, three language arts, two social science and three science tests were administered as new tests. During the 1991-92 school year, three language arts, two social science, and three science tests were administered as new tests.

Various procedural and informational documents are produced by the district's testing program. Procedural documents include annual updates of the district's test processing (scanning) manual and the composition test scoring manual. The district testing committee report, containing

information and procedures on the district's revised testing program, was approved by the Board of Directors (The reader is referred to Agenda item 91-162, June 18, 1991.)

Testing information is reported to the stakeholders in a variety of ways.

Test score information is provided by three types of documents. First, after fall testing, standardized test results are returned from the Iowa Testing Programs and summary tables are distributed to building principals. Second, a testing report is presented to the Board of Directors, usually each January. The reader is referred to the document, ***Assessment Program Results*** which was presented by the Superintendent to the Board of Directors on February 4, 1992. Third, when information regarding objectives-based tests has been compiled, test graphs and computer reports of each test are provided to building principals and subject-area supervisors for their own use in making instructional decisions. These reports list individual student achievement along with classroom and building level achievement information.

The indicators of a quality testing program are primarily qualitative and anecdotal. The testing staff has been able to build a good rapport with building staff responsible for the testing process in each school. Some building staff have sent cards and letters, in addition to the rare plant or flower, in appreciation of the department's quick response or helping a building out of a "jam." It has truly become a good working relationship. The testing program has built support of building staff persons, indicated by a high percentage of returning testing specialists (68% of testing specialists from 1988-1989 returned for 1989-1990; 73% of testing specialists from 1989-1990 returned for 1990-1991). The department has experienced a reduction in trouble calls, partly a function of more experienced testing specialists.

Student Information

Enhancing the value of student information is our primary function.

The third Friday in September is the official count date. This date is used for two annual state reports and two annual district reports, as well as many other special reports throughout the year. The first of the reports, the *Basic Educational Data Survey* (BEDS) is due the following Friday. It reports all students by building, grade, race, and sex and includes teacher full time equivalencies by grade level. Another section reports course enrollments by building by sex. This is complicated because Des Moines course numbers must be matched with Department of Education course numbers. The report is due to the Department of Education one week from the official count date. September 1991 was the first time in memory that the report was on time.

On October 1 another report of enrollment, *Certified Enrollment,* is due to the Department of Education. Certified Enrollment determines state funding. This also is as of the third Friday in September. It includes a report on open enrollment, Des Moines students in non-public schools, and students for whom tuition is paid to attend school elsewhere.

In-district reports that use parts of the official September enrollment information are the *Enrollment Report* and the *Minority Enrollment Report*. The last two years the *Enrollment Report* has been expanded to include early childhood students served by the district but not counted in the state's certified enrollment. Both reports include extensive graphics to illustrate

trends and areas of concern. Reports on elementary class size and class size frequencies are also generated from this information.

The *Iowa Department of Education End-of-Year Non-Fiscal Survey* is due August 1 and includes information about student withdrawals, 18-20 year old students, diploma recipients, *Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act Supplement*, and *Follow-Up Graduate Status*.

LEA's Certified Annual Financial Report (formerly the SAR) includes information on average daily attendance and average daily membership that is provided by this department. This annual report is due in August.

The *Withdrawal Report* is prepared each summer to present information about students who withdraw from school before graduation. The report issued in 1991 was expanded to include the alternative schools. The last two years the report has included extensive graphics and all data have been building verified on a name and student number basis.

The following projects involve downloading student information from MICC, designing appropriate forms, importing the data, and printing on laser printers: *Permanent Records, Destination of Graduates, Special Education Exit Forms, Senior Letters, Special Education Transportation Forms*, and the *Transportation Report*. All require hours to print and some require days; however, typing the information would be both much slower and less accurate.

...grade five to six transition

One annual project is the grade five to six transition. EDULOG is used to determine which fifth graders live in each of the middle school attendance areas. That information is merged into a word processing file and a personalized letter is printed telling each student what his/her home middle school is and what alternatives are available. Parents return a part of this letter to the elementary schools where the "expected" middle school is keyed into MICC. Additional information is entered about reading levels, Des Moines Plan status, and music activities. Appropriate information is then downloaded, formatted, and sent to each of the middle schools to aid in student scheduling and planning.

The boundary module of EDULOG is used to generate numerous reports that involve the home addresses of students. For example, Des Moines has to report annually on the Des Moines students who live in Warren County. Last year boundary planning information and program planning information was completed for middle schools, high schools, and special education. On request we prepare lists of the eighth graders living in the high school attendance areas to assist the grade eight to nine transition.

Assistance to Buildings, Divisions and Departments

Evaluation, Surveys, Planning and Research

Consultative assistance has been provided to schools as they developed and prepared to implement school improvement plans. Assistance was provided as a result of special requests by 18 buildings and on 34 occasions during the 1990-91 school year. During 1991-92, similar assistance has been provided on 28 occasions as of the date of this report.

Assistance was provided in the design, administration, and interpretation of the results of surveys designed for use at the building level.

The Department of Information Management is asked to design, conduct and analyze results of surveys that produce useable information. During the 1990-91 and 1991-92 school years, the department has taken a lead role with respect to the following major surveys:

- Senior Survey, annual
- School Climate Survey, biennial
- College Success of Graduates, annual
- Phase III-B observations and surveys, annual

Documentation of results obtained for each survey completed have been distributed. Additional copies of any written reports are available from the Department of Information Management. The department also conducts or helps district personnel on internal research investigations.

...books... periodicals... reference library...

The department subscribes to many periodicals and purchases books that contain current information about educational issues. Books and periodicals are routinely screened and routed to appropriate staff that have an interest or involvement in the topic of articles or research. A reference library of educational materials is maintained to assist persons seeking information.

A facsimile (FAX) machine is located in the department for incoming and outgoing transmissions. Incoming messages for other departments are dispatched to the appropriate recipient. Persons wishing to send information are provided assistance.

In addition to preparing two written evaluations concerning departmental operation, the department also prepares an evaluation of The Des Moines Plan for Student Success. One program evaluator position in the department is funded by Chapter 1 because of the specific involvement of the department in this activity.

During the District Research Committee's five meetings during the 1990-1991 school year, 21 research proposals were reviewed. Five proposals were accepted, three were conditionally accepted (modifications and final acceptance by committee chair), 12 proposals were rejected (two resubmissions were accepted), and one had no action taken on it. Final acceptance rate for the 21 studies was 48 percent.

Des Moines Plan Equating Study

This study was an attempt to reduce the number of tests that a student being served by the Des Moines Plan must take to satisfy state evaluation regulations. The secondary purpose was to use more curriculum-appropriate indices for identification of students to be served by the Des Moines Plan program. The study was conducted in grades two through five.

The Des Moines Plan's proposal for modification of its evaluation procedures involves two aspects. First, it was proposed that the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) be equated with the district's objectives-based math

and reading tests (and also with the Silver, Burdett, & Ginn reading series). Second, it was proposed that local norms be developed for the district objectives-based math and reading tests (or the Silver, Burdett, & Ginn reading series).

The study was conducted and feedback has been received from the Chapter 1 regional Technical Assistance Center. The final documents have been submitted to the Iowa and Department of Education.

New Mathematics Assessment

In an attempt to make the Math 11 Checkpoint test more applicable to life skills, this test was revised and separated into two parts. The first component, which will remain unchanged across time, will consist of a fewer number of multiple choice items selected from the original test. The second component, which will be revised each year, will be a set of open-ended items that are based on a single issue of *USA Today*. The primary intent of this section is to evaluate the application of mathematics skills to a particular life skill (reading and interpreting mathematics related concepts found in a newspaper).

Additional Projects/Activities

- Business/Education Alliance Employability Skills Survey
- IMSplus Technical Support
- SBM/SDM committee work
- District Inservice
- Infinity ∞ Schools committee work

Student Information

Student Information has prepared graphics for special education, ESL, and health services as well as samples for surveys, some of which include geographic parameters. An unduplicated list of households for district mailings generated in the department not only saves money on postage but also improves the district's image since families do not receive a mailing for each student. The department furnishes data for many grant proposals. A file for third grade music test scores using basic demographics saved clerical time and made the information more useful. The department utilized information downloaded from MICC to assist with state and federal reporting of vocational students and state SUCCESS reporting. The department also set up the file used for out-of-district special education billings and assists with its use.

Building staff receive assistance in their use of the student accounting database. The department works closely with building secretaries, registrars, and other records personnel. The Student Accounting Specialist serves on the Mid-Iowa Pupil Accounting Oversight Committee and has worked on the longitudinal student database that will be implemented in the fall of 1992, and coordinates district level codes for student information fields used at MICC.

Management of the Macintosh network is another area of responsibility. Information on the network is as accessible to users as information on

another disk drive. The student demographics are regularly download from MICC and widely used.

Reports produced or assistance provided may be recurring or to address a one-time need. For example, the *Relationship of Grade Point Averages and Credit Hours of Graduating Seniors* was a one-time report. Other areas are continually monitored, but the focus of the report varies. Examples are minorities in special education and various special state, federal, and local reports on attendance, withdrawals, and personnel. The flexibility of personal computers generates unique reports effectively and efficiently.

FUTURE PLANNING

Strategic Planning

There is a need to improve the timing, content, and format of the school and district improvement plan. The Department of Information Management is closely observing a group of five schools receiving Phase III funds to develop improvements in the timing, format, and content of the school improvement plan. Proposed refinements include the inclusion of vision and belief statements and looking at more disaggregated outcome information to assess needs and develop objectives. Relating outcome information to the seven effective schools correlates is being studied. There is a need to continue this initiative with the goal of refining the school improvement plan for districtwide use as a more useful tool for strategic planning. Phase III funds currently allocated to the demonstration project are approximately $50,000.

There is a need to improve the calendar for strategic planning activities. Building principals indicate that the current calendar requires them to develop objectives for their improvement plan too far in advance of their implementation. School and district planning for a longer period than a single year needs to be encouraged in order to focus on improvements that may take several years to achieve. The schools and district will also generate a shared vision of educational excellence for the future. There may be additional costs associated with staff development.

There needs to be a list of expectations for school-based management. School-based management is a new phenomenon in the arena of managing schools; therefore, most school administrators have little formal training and even less experience in its operation and direction. One of the most frequent comments heard from building administrators is "I need to know what is expected both of me and my school within the context of school-based management." To address this need, the department working with the SBM/SDM Coordinating Council, has developed an instrument for use by building principals to aid management practices. After its initial use by principals, the instrument will be completed biannually by an expanded group within the attendance area and results will be published in the building's school information base. In alternate years, the *School Climate Survey* will be given to provide buildings with a standard method of measuring their climate and provide a method of acquainting staff with the major elements of effective schooling research. Associated costs would be limited to printing, distribution, and analysis of results.

An annual *State of the Schools Report* should be developed to provide stakeholders with information about district operations. Trend data about the district will be disaggregated by ethnic group and gender. The report could have more than one format. An interactive multimedia format would allow the viewer to access the information of interest. These data would appear in the form of text, graphics, photographs, voice and motion video. The user could browse the text or move to a topic of interest. An electronic database format that staff could download to a computer using layouts provided through the system or creating personalized layouts might also be provided. The data could then be displayed as the user desired. The school

staff would have similar access to building data. The district's *State of the Schools Report* may model the School Information Bases.

On February 14, 1992, the district submitted a proposal for funding to the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC). The mission of this corporation is to jump-start and underwrite the design of new high-performance learning environments for American children. In Des Moines, the project has been designated INFINITY ∞ SCHOOLS. Characteristics of the INFINITY ∞ SCHOOLS include:

- world class achievement standards
- a curriculum that is interdisciplinary, and
- a structure that supports the learning of ALL.

Whether funded by NASDC or not, INFINITY∞ Schools could become the strategic plan for a new design of educational delivery in Des Moines.

INFINITY ∞ SCHOOLS could become the strategic plan for a new design of educational delivery in Des Moines.

Program Evaluation

There is a need to focus information that is obtained from program evaluations on the district mission. Each program evaluation should indicate how that subject area or department contributes to 1) providing a quality educational program, 2) to a diverse community of students, 3) where all are expected to learn. Program evaluation authors have identified needs in academic and service areas and prioritized their identified needs as well as estimated costs. Following board worksessions, authors are asked to reexamine their prioritization of needs and verify or revise the need of highest priority. Additional information about potential sources of revenue and the degree of implementation necessary to show an impact on teaching and learning is also requested. Sources that might play a part in addressing identified needs should be identified. Subsequently, the results of the needs prioritization process must become part of the input for the budgeting process. The process in place to manage this function does not entail additional costs.

There is a need to focus information that is obtained from program evaluations on the district mission.

The district mission also needs to be brought into a much sharper focus as the school and district improvement plans are developed. Improvement plans at the school and district level need to clearly focus on providing a "quality educational program to a diverse community of students where all are expected to learn."

The abstract of each program evaluation is an important section of the report. It is distributed to all administrators in the district as well as members of the Strategic Planning Committee. The abstract may be the only part of the report that is read by large numbers of individuals and it should convey the essential information for the reader in a concise and educational manner. The Department of Information Management will need to develop materials to assist program evaluation authors to write better abstracts. Supervisors need to be strongly encouraged to submit their abstracts for review at the same time the entire document is given to the Department of Information Management for critique. As electronic mail capabilities grow, the audience should be expanded by electronic mail to many recipients.

Because of a variety of reasons (turnover in staff, board/administration need for immediate information, restructuring the central administration) the order in which program evaluations were presented during the initial cycle of

reports was changed and disrupted until the logical sequence was lost. As the next cycle of program evaluations begins, a more logical ordering of presentations should be developed. To accomplish this, the teaching and learning area should be subdivided into curricular areas and special programs. The service area reports will be arranged in order by the function performed to the greatest extent possible. The reordering may mean that some subject areas or departments may have longer or shorter amounts of time between reports; however, a logical sequence would ensure that succeeding reports are related in some manner.

None of the needs identified in the area of program evaluation require funding over and above normal training costs.

School Information Bases

School Information Bases are currently created in the central office and printed for distribution. Data could be provided to buildings and staff could then further disaggregate the data to answer questions of interest to their stakeholders.

Most of the cost of the school information bases is staff time to assemble and format the data. This cost is already absorbed by the department. The cost for building staff to further disaggregate data is the price of the software. Various software have the capabilities necessary and cost approximately $100.00 per computer. Many buildings already have appropriate software. If it were necessary to purchase one copy of the software for each of 64 buildings or sites, the total cost would be $6,400.00. One to two days of staff development for at least one person per building would be beneficial.

Assessment

In order for building personnel to make ongoing instructional decisions, it is necessary to enhance the process of continuously monitoring student progress. IMSplus is being phased in to all elementary buildings to facilitate monitoring mastery of objectives and making instructional decisions. As the use of IMSplus becomes more widespread, staff training and system maintenance and support will need to be expanded. Also, the annual cost of scannable forms for IMSplus for all elementary schools is estimated at $15,000 (for mathematics and reading). Computer adaptive testing should also be examined in terms of its potential to support continuous progress monitoring. However, districtwide implementation of computer adaptive testing may be cost-restrictive.

In order for building personnel to make ongoing instructional decisions, it is necessary to enhance the process of continuously monitoring student progress.

The possibility of using an objectives-based test item bank should be examined to provide teachers with items to assess mastery of specific objectives or strands in various subject areas. To conduct formative assessment, teachers would select items from a bank directory, thereby customizing tests to suit their own purposes. To conduct summative assessments and program evaluations, subject area supervisors would be able to request a set of items from the item bank, or from a set of protected items. Purchase of existing item banks from vendors can cost from $5,000 to $20,000, depending on the number of subject areas and items. The

feasibility of developing a within-district item-banking system will be examined.

The district should explore the expansion of performance-based assessments. With a renewed emphasis on those things students should be able to do, the district should explore and identify methods of documenting student performance. New methods of scoring and reporting results should be investigated in an attempt to hold down the high costs inherent in performance-based assessments. Currently the cost of scoring the fall composition assessment for all students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 is approximately $25,000. If the scoring process for new assessments is similar, the budget impact would be proportionally higher. One possibility for cost containment would be to provide teachers time during the instructional day for conducting assessment activities.

Expanded uses for portfolios should be considered. They could contain samples of a student's exemplary work throughout the year, as a demonstration of performance outcomes or information on various media (written, audio and/or video tape, accolades, computer diskettes). Portfolios with standard types of outcome information would necessitate the development of a core set of performance-based or alternative assessments, required of all students. The district may need to provide a "laundry list" from which students may select items to enclose in the portfolio. Items to enclose in the portfolio could vary by grade and subject area.

As the district moves in the direction of continuous progress monitoring and expanded performance-based assessment of student learning, a refocusing of the objectives-based tests on their initial purpose--curriculum evaluation--may occur. Some of the cost of objectives-based tests could be diverted into an expanded performance-based testing system; however, because of time and cost efficiencies, many objectives-based tests may need to be retained.

In the 1992 State of the Schools address, and in the February 4, 1992, report to the Board of Directors on the district's assessment program results, the Superintendent alluded to the concept of establishing levels of expectation for all students in terms of mastering subject matter objectives. These levels of expectation would provide a standard of comparison in line with the district's mission, "...where all are expected to learn." Test data could be analyzed to yield information regarding what percent of the students in a subject area or course mastered the objectives identified as critical at the level of expectation. For example, the data would answer the question, "What percent of the students in high school physics scored a 70 percent or better on the objectives-based physics test?" The department needs to work with the programmers at MICC to determine how a report that would contain this type of information could be developed, and ascertain its cost.

Files of test reports and raw data could be created and distributed to buildings via floppy diskettes for buildings to analyze. School information bases may also be distributed electronically, accessible by floppy diskette or download procedure.

As the cost of mainframe computing increases, it may be necessary to search for alternative forms of managing and organizing information. One alternative is to take advantage of the increasing power of microcomputers to handle large data files. Because of the expanded power of new desktop computers, it is possible to analyze large data files and create user-friendly reports or electronic files that building principals can store on their own computers for their own planning purposes. The testing program staff uses computers to design tests, including text and graphics, which could also be facilitated by higher speed computers. To enhance productivity by reducing "wait time" (the time it takes to analyze a large data file or to regenerate test graphics), a higher speed computer is essential. Cost recovery for microcomputer-based statistical procedures (compared to mainframe costs) should be between one and two years. Other needs in the area of assessment include the following:

- Each building should be equipped with a high speed MS-DOS computer in order to facilitate IMSplus and continuous progress monitoring in all buildings.

- It will be necessary to acquire technology for large scale information storage and retrieval systems in order to facilitate test item-banking.

- As the availability of customized reports for buildings and departments becomes more widespread, the necessity to have the technology work with very large files and create multiple reports will increase tremendously.

The Iowa Department of Education has created a task force to establish state outcomes and assessment processes. The product of this task force will undoubtedly have an impact on the district's assessment program. The movement toward a national test is gaining strength, which will similarly impact the district. The Department of Information Management will monitor the developments occurring in these two areas and make recommendations that will focus on the welfare of the students while fulfilling state and federal mandates.

Student Information

Steps are being taken to streamline the processing of student information.

Within a very few years, student records should be stored and transferred electronically, not only within our district but also among districts, post-secondary institutions, and the business community.

The district has already taken several steps to make this a reality. This summer Mid-Iowa Computer Center will begin implementation of a longitudinal student database they have developed in line with standards set by the National Center for Education Statistics. Historical information on students of school age who are attending or have attended the Des Moines Public Schools will be easily accessible to those authorized to use it. A report generator will furnish flexibility to the database and will need to be fully utilized. The longitudinal student database was written to include more information. That information will need to be entered and maintained. Clerical staff will have to learn not only to do what they are now doing in a new way, but they will have more to do. For the success of the new

database, a person to support the clerical staff by helping users learn to do data entry and make full use of the database is needed.

During the spring of 1993, Mid-Iowa plans to accommodate distributive processing. At that time building information will be downloaded to the buildings. Each building will truly control its own information. They will upload it periodically as a backup and to make district data available. In order to utilize this capability secretaries who are skilled computer people in each of the buildings will be needed. Larger buildings may need to upgrade their computers.

An electronic transcript is scheduled to be available in the spring of 1993. High school registrars' work will then become computerized. At that point, the district will be ready to become involved in the National Center for Education Statistics electronic transfer of student records and to establish the district's initial records trading partners, (the entities who request the largest numbers of student records). This will require modems, programming, and training.

After the electronic transcript becomes a reality, the district will need to change the method of long term storage of student records. Currently, paper is kept for five years and microfilmed. A different form of permanent storage, possibly an optical disk system, which combines the permanence of microfilm with the flexibility of disk will need to be chosen. There will be several years in which to choose the technology, but it will be necessary to keep abreast of developments in this field.